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## "Reviews and Information on Japanese Animation Software"

ISSUE 13 7/6/1990

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~ Special Mail Order Services Review No. 2 ~

This is the 13th in a series of files of comments and reviews of anime (Japanese animation) items that we have bought. Please direct all comments to us by E-mail or post us a message in the Forum. We also welcome any reviews, artwork, or comments you would like to have included in the next ANIME STUFF issue. Also please send us any comments about any incorrect information contained here. A correction will be placed in the next ANIME STUFF.

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/ QUICK NOTE \

Well, it's been quite a while since Stuff commented on the state of mail order anime services here in the U.S. The last time I did was in Issue 4, 8/4/1987! Whew! A lot of things have changed since then. Some old favorite anime sources have dried up, or fallen out of favor due to mismanagement. And several new ones have sprung up to replace them. It certainly is a different and bigger anime scene then it was almost three years ago.

The reason I wanted to do another issue of reviews of mail order sources is that I have found that many folks are still referring to Issue 4 for places to shop! And of course by doing so, they meet with dissapointment since most of the places we recommended back then either don't exist anymore, or offer terrible service. Keep in mind that the places we recommend and list addresses for in ANIME STUFF are places that the ANIME STUFF staff actually shops at and have received excellent service from.

In this issue I'll also discuss the businesses that went bad or bust and what happened to them. After all, some of them are still in business and the anime fan should be cautious when dealing with them.

- Tom Mitchell.

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//////////////////////////////////GIF GRAPHICS NOTE\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\
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AS13G1.GIF : The GIF format graphic "cover" for this issue featuring an illustration of Nanmo and Mugi from the TV show DIRTY PAIR. Looks like they've become a little impatient waiting for their anime to arrive in the mail! Original illustration by Tom Mitchell.

You might also note that this graphic is in 640 X 400 X 2 resolution. Well, this is a new resolution mode we are experimenting with. Just about any system should be able to view it. And it will print out great! We've

found that a lot of folks actually take the time an paper to print Anime Stuff out. So now the cover is in a format that will look great when printed.

////////////////////////////////////MAIL ORDER INFO\\

SIGHT & SOUND  
1275 MAIN STREET  
WALTHAM, MA 02154  
PHONE: 1-617-894-8633

An excellent source for anime laserdiscs. This is actually the place I bought my first anime disc from in 1985 when they were known as THE INSTANT REPLAY and under different management. Since then, they were acquired a couple of years ago by WOK TALK INC. and have gotten even much better.

Masaki Takai and I were the first two folks to turn them on to importing anime for us. Since then, we seem to have created a monster since they have become the East coast source for imported anime video. Their service has always been excellent, although their delivery of discs from Japan can be slow at times. Recently this seems to have gotten worse. But they are always able to get what you want eventually. Sight & Sound has also started carrying a TON of in-stock anime laserdiscs and BGM CDs. I envy those of you who can check out their retail store. I hear it's quite nice.

Also, their staff may not know a lot about anime...they call Cream Lemon "Cream and Lemon" in their catalog...and sometimes pronounce "anime" as "aneem", but they are learning. If you order new discs from them, be sure and provide catalog numbers for the discs if they are titles that Sight & Sound doesn't know about yet. It will help them search for it.

In short, Sight & Sound's relatively long track record in anime have made them one of the better and more stable anime sources for the past few years. Orders may be slow, but their excellent service and store front business give them a lot of credibility.

NIKAKU ANIMART  
615 North 6th. St.  
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA 95112  
PHONE: 1-408-971-2822

Nikaku Animart is far the best anime mail order retailer that I know of.  
In fact I don't recall any of the Anime Stuff staff saying that they have ever had an problems with Nikaku. The service is friendly and delivery of mailed goods is surprisingly fast. Items mailed are packed so carefully that I think guerillas could deliver it with out any harm. They also issue a lot of anime catalog updates in their simple type-written catalog flyer. And for the type of goods that they carry, they feature the best prices of any place I know of.

Nikaku Animart carries a wide variety of anime goods. And in fact, is the only reliable mail order source for some types of goods that we have found so far. While our other sources specialize in anime laser video discs and compact discs, Nikaku carries such things as anime books, magazines, LOTS of compact discs, posters, and other odd bits such as anime notebooks, pencils, idol cards, stickers, etc. They have also started to dabble in some in-stock laserdiscs...which I don't think they really need to do since we have so many good sources specializing in just LD's. Nikaku should keep specializing in the items that other sources don't carry.

Also, Nikaku has a retail store that you can visit. This has proved to be a definite plus as far as long term stability goes as a business in anime mail order. All things considered, you can't do much better than Nikaku for excellent service.

LASER PERCEPTIONS  
3300 JUDAH STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94122  
PHONE: 1-415-753-2016

I like to think of Laser Perceptions as the West Coast version of Sight & Sound. Again, the specialty here is imported anime LDs. Personally, I have less experience with Laser Perceptions than some of our other staff

members, as I have always used some of our other sources for discs. Although, I have bought a couple discs from them and found their service to be very similar to Sight & Sound's. Laser Perceptions is also another retail store, so you can visit them and take advantage of their large in-stock anime disc selection. Perhaps Laser Perceptions' biggest advantage over Sight & Sound is that they tend to deliver special ordered discs faster.

ANIMAGIK  
P.O. BOX 1235  
RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CALIFORNIA 91729-1235  
PHONE : 1-714-941-9750

Before I get to my comments on ANIMAGIK, staff member Albert Wong also wrote a review of their services. And he did it in the plus & minus style that I used in Anime Stuff Issue 4...

#### Animagik

Animagik started out in 1988. Mostly dealing with selling comic books and games. It wasn't until July of 1989 that Animagik started dealing in mail-order anime. Owned and operated by Patrick L. Minyard, who does custom T-shirts, by the way, Animagik has the most complete selection of items for the discriminating anime fan.

#### Features:

- + Animagik provides many shipping choices ranging from UPS Ground/US Mail to UPS Next Day Air. COD's are also available.
- + Has a large selection of anime goods including Laser Discs, Compact Discs, even VHS tapes. "Garage" kits and models are available. Even really unusual items like stuffed Totoros and Jiji's can be found in the Animagik inventory.
- + Free catalog listing current Laser discs, Compact discs and VHS tapes that can be ordered.
- + Prices are occasional adjusted to reflect the dollar/yen ratio.
- Inventory is very limited. Usually, your order is processed and your order is shipped from Japan. Turnaround time range from two weeks to

months depending on the scarcity of your order.  
- Credit cards are not honored....yet. Only checks and money orders are accepted. No quatloos or bright-shiny-beads, either.

Animagik can be reached by mail, phone, Compuserve and Internet computer networks. Animagik can also be reached on the Animag BBS.

- Albert Wong

I would just like to add a few things to Albert's comments. Animagik is one of the newer anime mail order sources on the scene. I have found the service to be very close to what Nikaku Animart offers...fast delivery, and personable service. The specialty here is mainly in CDs, LDs, and...surprisingly...VHS video tapes. (In fact, it's the only source for mail-order anime video tapes that any of us know of!) Animagik also carries some other items such as animation cels, and model kits. I'd also like to note that lately, Animagik seems to be the fastest source for importing new anime video titles on LD. Another advantage that I like is the fact that even though Animagik does not take credit cards, they will only ask for payment when an item arrives. This is unusual and very convenient for a smaller mail-order only business. This is a good idea because that way if anything even happens to the business, customers won't be stuck with lost funds. This will prevent any repeats of what happened to many customers who shopped at another similar business...Wyvern Web Graphics.

#### WYVERN WEB GRAPHICS

If you didn't know already, WWG is out of business. When it was good, WWG was very good. When things turned bad, it really crashed and burned as a business and took the funds of many customers with it. A situation that has still yet to be fully resolved, and I don't think it ever will.

What happened? Basically, when the owner of the business left to try a career in Japan and upgrade the import capabilities of the business, she left the company in the charge of some very poor and unstable hands. The

business was neglected, communications stopped, and merchandise that was waiting to be shipped that was already pre-paid for by customers sat idle (and still is someplace) as the manager, from all accounts known to me, suffered some sort of emotional breakdown.

For customers, the big problem was the pre-paid order situation. This never seemed like much of a problem when the business was at it's best as the owner was very competent and personable and provided excellent service. It is a shame that she had to leave the business in such unstable hands. The owner was originally supposed to stay in Japan for a year and return to the US. It is going on 3 years now, and I have often felt that perhaps this was a way of not having to deal with business wreckage back home. Meanwhile, things remain unresolved. I know that some of you reading this may have some comments of your own on what happened to WWG. Please send me your comments, and perhaps I can publish them in the next Anime Stuff.

## BOOKS NIPPAN

Ever wonder why Books Nippan, such a major name in US Anime Retailing is no longer listed as a recommended retailer in Anime Stuff? In 1986, when I was first getting into anime, Books Nippan was THE big source for anime goods in mail order. It would seem that I became a customer in their last good year. The mail-order business focused on the BOOKS NIPPAN ANIMATION FAN CLUB, and this group originally provided excellent service, regular catalogs, and great customer communications.

Well, with a change in management, headed by David Riddick, the club became neglected as the new group pursued projects in music and video publishing under the US Renditions label. Service and customer relations declined and orders were neglected. I even had problems with their anime magazine subscription service that took a year to resolve, only to find that they took my check but never bothered to log the order.

Meanwhile, Books Nippan became more interested in cornering the market on Robotech related items, got stuck with old and poorly selected inventory, and have become famous for their tremendously inflated prices on in-stock goods...raising prices as much as 100-300% over current Yen/Dollar exchange rates. Folks looking at their booths at conventions often refer to BN as "Crooks Nippan" now. A real shame. Being in marketing myself, I always cringe when I see a good business go bad due to bad marketing, customer relations, and simple mistakes. Books Nippan is a classic example of a small company neglecting it's core business as it over-extends itself pursuing new markets without having staff in place to pay attention to the core business.

## GENERAL PRODUCTS

A new kid on the block that has already got a reputation for it's vapor-catalog, even before the business is underway. General Products is a major anime retailer in Japan famous for it's specialty in model kits. The US business is off to a rocky start with potential customers by not honoring catalog requests on its lavish catalog pictured in an ad in Animag. Now the company is saying that catalogs will be shipped but be cautious in ordering from it as most of the items will not be available.

Oh, goody! We will be watching this group closely.

[illegible]

## VIDEO SALES UP & PRICES ARE DOWN ACCORDING TO JVA REPORT

The June 2nd issue of Billboard magazine had an interesting special on Japan's music and video markets. It covers all sorts of things from popular Japanese music stars to the Tsutomu Miyazaki murders.

So, how are laserdiscs and anime doing in the Japanese video market? Very, very well. Laserdiscs again are the leading configuration in home video software sales. And anime is carving a large niche for itself as a home video category. Here is a short quote on sales figures from the latest report from the Japan Video Assn....

"In volume videocassette sales totalled 16,989,816 tapes, videocassette rentals 4,441,522 tapes, and videodisc sales 20,791,290 discs. Unit



prices for sold videocassettes were 5,128 yen (down 19.2% from the year before), for rental videocassettes, 8,734 yen (down 4.5%) and for videodiscs, 5,224 yen (down 12.5%)

"Of 129,570 million yen in videocassette sales and rentals, the biggest share or 38.4% was accounted for by non-Japanese movies, followed by Japanese movies with 20.2%. Next in line were animation (anime) films with 17%."

As you can see, prices for things are also dropping. The report said that this was largely do to the decision last year to stop the uniform pricing of video and audio software by the software companies. Companies are now free to set their own retail prices for goods. Of course this means that there will be further competition in the marketplace, and that prices will continue to drop.

For anime fans, this is pretty good news on top of the recent events with the stronger Dollar.

– Tom Mitchell

[illegible]

I hope all you new anime fans find this issue useful. I sure wish I had something like this to guide me through ordering anime goods when I first started. My dream is still to be able to walk into and shop at Animate or some other anime store in Japan. I don't think I could handle actually going into a store to shop for anime goods! (^\_^)

Also, thank you for all of the folks who again have made comments on how much they enjoy Anime Stuff. It really makes my day.

Next issue...A Kimagure Orange Road Special! And more reviews of more stuff!

- Tom Mitchell

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Date of original publication: 7/6/1990

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This publication originally appears on CompuServe Information Service's

Comic Book &amp; Animation Forum.

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